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ABSTRACT

This booklet looks at two models that apply to problem behavior of students. The medical model defines problems as being within the student, and assumes there is very little that teachers can do about the behavior of these students. An alternative model is often called the ecological or educational model. The educational model targets disturbing, disruptive behavior rather than disturbed, disruptive students and gives the better account of what is known about behavior problems in schools. In addition, it avoids many of the disadvantages of the medical model. The most serious of these disadvantages is the likelihood of the negative effects upon students of the labeling that is part of the medical model. Attention might be more productively centered in changing the environment to meet the needs of a wide range of students, and on preventing misbehavior from occurring in the first place. There are a number of strategies available that schools could consider using to deal with persistent and/or serious misbehavior. It is important for schools to select strategies that form a total framework for positive discipline and behavior management. (LLL)

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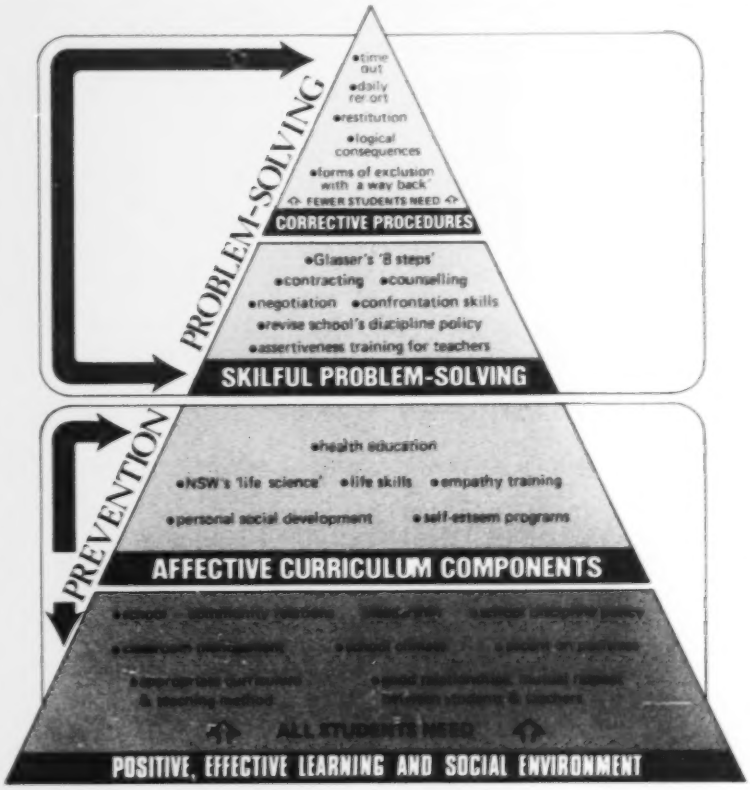

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A framework for positive approaches to students' behaviour

by Lorraine Murphy

Education Department of Tasmania

'A number of labels has been applied to troubled children, and the labeling process itself often adds to the youngster's difficulties.'

(S. Apter and J. Conoley, *Childhood Behaviour Disorders and Emotional Disturbance*, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1984)

'Public labelling humiliates and it also disseminates. The larger the audience who witness the labelling the greater the number of people to whom the label is communicated and the greater the chance that some of the audience will use the label and treat the pupils in accordance with it.'
(D.H. Hargreaves, quoted in V.J. Furlong, *The deviant pupil*, Open University Press, Philadelphia, 1985)

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CONTENTS

The importance of context to disruptive behaviour	5
Disturbing disrupting behaviour or disturbed disruptive students?	8
How serious is students' misbehaviour?	10
How consistent are students' disruptive characteristics?	12
The negative effects of 'deviance labelling'	15
The ineffectiveness of 'medical model' treatments for disruptive behaviour	17
The promise of the educational ecological approach	19
Reducing and managing disruptive behaviour in schools: four levels	21
Responses to serious misbehaviour	23
Varied provisions to assist schools	24
Conclusion	25
Four levels of provision schools can make to develop positive behaviour in students	26
References	27

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT TO DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

When we try to define 'disruptive', 'disturbed', 'alienated', or a host of other classificatory words that are applied to deviant behaviour, it becomes obvious that a social judgment is implied.

The Tasmanian Task Force responsible for the report *The incidence and management of alienated, disturbed and disruptive students in high and district high schools* (ADD Report) (Education Department, 1984), had the same difficulty as have all other researchers and writers interested in this topic: they had difficulty in defining 'the kinds of pupils who might be included' (p. 2). The Task Force, when it canvassed Tasmanian schools for information offered a very broad definition:

> those pupils who present a fairly constant management problem to all or most teachers, whose behaviour is frequently unacceptable in some way in the classroom and school grounds, and who absorb a disproportionate amount of time and attention of classroom teachers and senior staff (p. 3).

Using these guidelines, teachers in different schools come up with lists of similar terms to describe their troublesome students' behaviour.

Even so, the traits named were numerous and very disparate ranging from, 'talkative', and 'lacks application' to 'has criminal tendencies'. Furthermore, each term used could refer to a number of different types of behaviour. 'Relates poorly to peers', for example, could refer to avoiding peers' company, or to making inept attempts to seek it.

The only real link between all of these varied behaviours is that others are affected negatively by them, and often only in certain contexts. Talkativeness would not, one hopes, be perceived as negative in some contexts. It could be seen as healthy exuberance or even be received as a positive contribution. Even in similar contexts two different people might respond quite differently to a talkative student.

There is no conceivable way to avoid the social and contextual aspects of the meaning of 'disruptive' and like terms. They are those sorts of words. Problems develop, however, when they are used to describe students, because the terms are then used as though they are context-free.

There is widespread agreement about the 'social judgment' aspect of these words. Lawrence and Steed (1984) surveyed a number of European countries to compare views on disruptive behaviour in schools. In their survey, Lawrence and Steed defined disruptive behaviour as:

> behaviour which seriously interferes with the teaching process and/or seriously upsets the running of the school. It is more than ordinary misbehaviour in the classroom, playground, corridors, etc. It includes physical attacks and malicious destruction of property. (p. 5)

A large number of other definitions came from the surveyed countries. Lawrence and Steed examined them and concluded that all the definitions shared three common features. Correspondents seemed to agree that disruptive behaviour
(a) depends on people's perceptions,
(b) departs from the norm of the context of which in occurs, and
(c) has bad consequences.

The Swiss commented: 'Teachers interpret such behaviour very differently. Every teacher has and brings into practice his own subjective interpretation of it as requiring intervention. The same is true of parents'. The French said simply that it is 'failure to conform to socio-educational norms'.

Galloway had reached similar conclusions in his book, *Schools and disruptive pupils*, written in 1982 from a British perspective. He settled for defining disruptive behaviour as 'behaviour which appears problematic, inappropriate and disturbing to teachers'. He also drew attention to the fact that one teacher may be unaffected by behaviour that another finds inappropriate or disturbing.

The European commentators all agreed that disruptive behaviour 'disturbed the tenor of teaching and school life'. They made a further important point: 'This did not mean that children responsible for disruption should be labelled as deviant: reasons for the behaviour had to be explored whilst at the same time efforts were needed to try and alleviate the immediate situation' (p. 8).

The Western Australian Education Department report *Disruptive behaviour in schools* (1985) concurs with European, British, and many American writers, when it points out that

> definitions of disruptive behaviour have changed from the view which had currency in the early 1970's that *students were disruptive*, to the position that *disruptive incidents are the joint responsibility of schools and students* (p. 9 [Emphasis as given in the report]).

It would seem, then, that if behaviour can be disruptive (or disturbed, or alienated) only in certain contexts and by virtue of its effects on others, then the context, and the expectations and tolerances of other people within that context, merit as much

examination as the behaviour in question and the student who displays it. It could be that, at times, the context and the perceptions of others are part of the problem, and therefore could become part of the solution.

DISTURBING DISRUPTING BEHAVIOUR OR DISTURBED DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS?

Often, in attempting to grapple with a behaviour problem a teacher will concentrate on the problem she sees in the student and not on the behaviour or its context. This is reflected in the Task Force's report of the survey in Tasmanian schools. The title of the report refers to 'disruptive students', not disruptive behaviour. This is not a criticism of the report. Surveys of this type need to begin with the language and concepts of those whose opinions are being sought, and the Task Force was originally set up to consider kinds of students whom principals were concerned about.

Since then, information from many sources, including work being done in schools, has suggested new perspectives.

A resource book for schools was produced recently, out of the work of the Task Force. It is entitled *Let's look at disruptive behaviour in schools* (1986). The book encourages schools to look at a variety of preventive measures to address the problems posed by disruptive or apathetic behaviour. It suggests topics that can be discussed in schools so that the issues are seen in the much broader frameworks of the education system, school organisation and climate, classroom management, the curriculum and school-community relations.

Many people still feel, however, that talk about disruptive behaviour is talk about a conspicuous though small group of students within their schools who have 'something wrong' with them, caused either by innate physical or emotional problems or by faulty home conditions or upbringing. People who see the problem predominantly in these ways may well accept that schools could benefit from self-review as suggested in the resource book, but may still find it hard to believe that if teachers were to, say, develop better communication skills, the disruptive behaviour of some students would diminish.

No one wishes to deny that there will be some students whom a school might not be able to reach despite its best efforts at prevention, and its most skilled attempts at problem-solving. The point being made here is that it is often not at all easy to determine which are the students who are unreachable, and which are merely unreached in their present school environments.

Research clearly indicates that teachers are bothered by a great many students whose behaviours can be shown to be very variable across time and across situations, and who therefore show that they can be influenced by what schools and teachers do during the course of the school day. Research also indicates that teachers have difficulty in distinguishing groups of disturbed as opposed to disturbing

students. In secondary schools these distinctions are particularly difficult because each teacher tends to see each student in only a limited range of situations.

This is not mere hair-splitting. The issue is a very important one and needs discussion in school communities. The way we conceptualise it will have important consequences for the way in which we seek solutions and allocate resources. It will have even more important consequences for students' reputations, educational opportunities and perhaps their futures.

If we continue to define problems as being 'in' students, we are implying that they react very similarly in most circumstances, and also that there is very little that ordinary people (teachers) can do about the behaviour of these students, who must therefore be handed over to 'experts' be they specialist teachers, counsellors or therapists.

This is, of course, the 'medical model', so entrenched in popular thinking about what could be called 'people problems'. It is the model that special educators, many psychologists and even psychiatrists have been trying to get rid of for the past two decades.

An alternative model is often called the 'ecological' or 'educational' model. It draws from systems and organisational theory and from sociology.

Paul Zionts (1985, p. 8) sets out the distinguishing features of the two models as they apply to problem behaviour.

	DISTURBING BEHAVIOUR (Educational model)	DISTURBED BEHAVIOUR (Medical model)
IDENTIFICATION	varies with evaluator	is obvious to most evaluators
CAUSE	may be the result of ecological situation	may be the result of neurology or psychological illness
PATTERN	is flexible and may change with the environment	is stable -- will not deviate across social situations
INTERVENTION	is through ecological manipulation	is through individual or group therapy

The use of the term 'disturbed' also implies that the behaviour of some students is seriously rather than mildly deviant. Both the consistency and the seriousness of the misbehaviour of most students categorised at any one time as disruptive or disturbed are open to question.

HOW SERIOUS IS STUDENTS' MISBEHAVIOUR?

There is evidence that the behaviours causing most stress in schools belong to the less serious 'disturbing' rather than the 'disturbed' category. In the Tasmanian ADD survey, the behaviours that were most frequently noted as problematic and characteristic of disruptive students were attention-seeking and distracting others (25% of all ADD students), followed by defiance and refusal to obey instructions (20% of all ADD students). In other words these students tended not to work, and not to obey teachers. Eighteen per cent of students had truancy as their first or only problem. For two thirds of the 934 students identified by the ADD survey, teachers gave only one comment on behaviour though they were invited to list up to four problems. It seems then that many students must have been considered as 'alienated, disturbed or disruptive' only on the basis of distractibility, disobedience or truancy. By community or by medical standards these are only mildly deviant behaviours.

More serious behaviours such as aggression tended to occur at much lower rates. Three and a half percent of ADD students were aggressive to staff and eight per cent were aggressive to peers. In neither case was the level of aggression described, and it would no doubt vary considerably. The set of behaviours relating to dishonesty, stealing and vandalism were mentioned as primary problems for only five per cent of troublesome students.

This picture of teachers' concerns is repeated, but with more and very interesting detail in an article by Steed entitled 'Disruptive pupils, disruptive schools: Which is the chicken? Which is the Egg?' (1985). The article reports a very careful survey in two London schools of actual incidents of disruption over two separate periods of a week each. Teachers noted these down as soon as possible after occurence. The authors expected to find more incidents of a serious nature, of the kind frequently reported in the press. What was actually reported was a very large number of the sorts of behaviours that are described in our Tasmanian report. Steed concludes (p. 5):

> Disruptive behaviour thus seems much more elusive than the popular understanding would suggest. It is more pervasive, more undermining, consisting of innumerable acts of pupils, whether deliberate or accidental, which indicate inattentiveness, unwillingness or inability to learn in the way teachers want. Teachers describe such behaviours as clustering around, rowdiness, abuse, bad language, talking, chatting, refusing authority. Mostly they referred to individual pupils, but sometimes whole classes seem to have been affected.

Unpleasant and stressful though this behaviour might be it is difficult to ascribe it all to *disturbed* students. Steed comments that on the whole teachers do not discuss most of these incidents. Often,

> there is a feeling of letting the side down, and consequently a conspiracy of silence. An alternative to silence is to develop a common understanding that difficulties are caused by certain classes of children (p. 6).

The relative peacefulness in the UK of 'top streams', has, he believes, allowed people to generate myths about what schools *should* be like. It is forgotten that primary schools and the old secondary modern schools always had to cope with a certain amount of difficult behaviour from pupils.

It is also forgotten that, as Furlong (1985, p. 3) reminds us,

> pupils have always posed a challenge for their teachers. In the seventeenth century they were apparently often armed, and violent mutinies were not uncommon (Aries, 1960). All of the best public schools seem to have been razed to the ground by their pupils at least once in their history (Ogilvie, 1953).

This is disturbing behaviour indeed, but unlikely to be due to medical or psychological causes in individual students.

HOW CONSISTENT ARE STUDENTS' DISRUPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS?

The so-called 'medical model' implies a stability and consistency in deviant behavioural traits that is not born out by research. The model underestimates the role of immediate environment in producing and maintaining disturbed behaviour.

The ADD report appears to confirm the stability of disruptive characteristics for a group within each school. Mention is made of the consensus in each school about these students. The information was, however, gathered at one point in time. Also instructions allowed the questionnaire to be filled out by one person, and no mention is made of how consensus about students was obtained.

Comments from schools indicated that teachers believed that about half of these students had been identified as problems during their primary school years. It must be remembered, however, that for the other half, disruptive behaviour appears to have commenced only in high school. The study did not seek information about the numbers identified as problems in primary school who *ceased* to be so on entry to high school.

Large-scale and longitudinal studies done elsewhere have revealed more transitoriness than stability for problem behaviour. (Remember that we are always talking of *perceived* problem behaviour). Topping (1983, p. 11) cites 'massive research evidence' documenting findings that a large number of pupils perceived to be disruptive at one time are not so perceived at later time 'irrespective of what has been done to or for them'. In other words, if we were using a medical model these behaviours could be described, as having a strong tendency towards 'spontaneous remission'. Topping, reviewing British and American research, notes that 'a persistence rate of around one third and a spontaneous remission rate of two thirds appears with stunning regularity.' The research has typically looked at groups identified as 'maladjusted' or similar, who were left in ordinary schools without specific intervention and compared them with equivalent groups given treatment (for example, psychotherapy, special placement or special programs). How embarrassing that the treated groups have often fared no better or have even done *worse* than untreated groups in terms of 'cure' rates: frequently only two thirds, or even less of the treated students 'got better'.

Of course the remaining pupils do show more stability of problem behaviour. It is important to be aware, however, that researchers have shown that it is far from easy to select, prior to re-assessment, who will improve and who will not, either with or without treatment.

It is dangerous, therefore, to identify and label individuals as innately disturbed or disruptive at one point in time.

Algozzine (1981, p. 173) describes a well-known longitudinal study of Rubin and Balow, carried out over the years 1971 to 1978, which throws much light on the issue of the stability of behavioural difficulties. Teachers of 1586 children were asked to rate their pupils annually throughout the children's primary school years. The results showed that more than half (58.6%) of all the pupils who had received three or more teachers' ratings were classified as being behaviourally difficult at least once. Among children who received six teachers' ratings, 68% of boys and 51% of girls were considered to have behaviour problems by at least one teacher. In addition, 65% of boys and 48% of girls were classified differently by different teachers.

One of the reasons that behaviour problems in schools may seem to reside consistently 'in' certain students has to do with the reputations they acquire after a disruptive incident, especially a dramatic one. A section in a Western Australian report entitled 'A Study of School Suspensions' clearly demonstrates this (p. 25-28). (The issue of labelling, which is closely related to that of reputation, is discussed in the next section).

Disruptive behaviour tends also to be specific to settings. The work of Rutter and others has shown that whilst some children are a problem at home, and some a problem at school, there is very little overlap between the two groups.

Reviewing this and other research, Topping (p. 13) concludes:

> Far from expecting disruptive children to be equally disruptive in varying educational settings, it seems more reasonable to expect them to be disruptive only in some lessons with some teachers in some situations, in some groups, in some kinds of provisions -- but not others.

He is referring to the majority of children considered by someone to be disruptive or difficult. A minority behave very badly in all or most situations and it is this group that should be of real concern. If there are settings where a child's behaviour is acceptable, then environmental factors in all settings need close examination as a first step in devising solutions to problems.

Given the nature of most of the behaviour problems that worry teachers it would seem that an educational model that targets disturbing, disruptive behaviour rather than disturbed, disruptive students is the more appropriate framework for educational systems to adopt.

The educational model gives the better account of what is known about behaviour problems in schools. In addition, it avoids many of the disadvantages of the medical model.

The most serious of these disadvantages is the likelihood of the negative effects upon students of the labelling that is part of the

medical model. Perhaps even these effects could be tolerated if the labels led to intervention methods that really worked. It turns out, however, that these methods are expensive, relatively inaccessible, time-consuming and cannot be relied upon to 'cure' the misbehaving student. Evidence of poor outcomes is not hard to find in the research literature. The 'labelling' and the 'effectiveness' issues are discussed below.

THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF 'DEVIANCE LABELLING'

Algozzine discusses labelling in the book *Childhood behaviour disorders* (1983, p. 13). The effects of labelling have been studied from two perspectives: the impact of the label on the perceptions and behaviour of the child, and the impact on other people's perceptions and actions with regard to that child. Behavioural deviance labels are known to be very sticky, and to transmit especially negative expectations to parents, teachers and other professionals likely to be working with the labelled individuals.

There is evidence that teachers expect less and accept less in both academic and social behaviour from students who are labelled deviant. In addition, many studies have shown that such a labelled person views himself or herself as inadequate and ineffective. As Algozzine remarks (p. 133) children establish an identity by conforming to the expectations of others, and so if people expect the child to exhibit deviant behaviour he or she will. Thus begins a sequence of events and expectations that is often difficult to interrupt and redirect.

The 'ADD' label recently created in Tasmania almost by general consensus, and with the best of intentions, may turn out, if we are not very careful, to be a very damaging one.

The term includes a very wide range of behaviours and traits brought together by the fact that they concern and worry teachers. They range from 'talkativeness' to 'criminal tendencies'. This would not matter so much if we were clearly referring to behaviours and not students.

Once students are labelled there is the danger of attributing to them extra negative characteristics, by association. Algozzine calls this the problem of the 'undistributed middle' in the identification syllogism. It goes like this:

> ADD students are talkative and overactive.
> John is talkative and overactive.
> Therefore he is an ADD student.

Since ADD students may have other qualities for example, 'criminal tendencies' it would be a very short step, continuing the chain of fallacious reasoning, to suggest that John might also have criminal tendencies.

One would hope that nothing of the sort would happen. Nevertheless this has happened with other classifying labels, such as dyslexia,

that are less stigmatising, and there is a danger of it happening with this very negative label.

It is for this reason that special educators have been trying for years to get rid of categorical labels, where these do not contribute to positive effects for students. Attention is more productively centered on changing the environment to meet the needs of a wide range of students, and on preventing misbehaviour from occurring in the first place.

The Western Australian report (1985) looking at the burgeoning of numbers identified as maladjusted in the UK between 1960 and 1976 asks pertinently whether the group of students described as maladjusted had been defined into existence by the inflexibility of the mainstream system and the availability of special provisions (p. 13).

Our secondary schools are embarking right now on an exciting process of renewal. Hopefully many of the changes will lead to better provision for a wider range of students. This is not to say that extra support is not needed to help teachers who are faced with difficult behaviour from students.

THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF 'MEDICAL MODEL' TREATMENTS FOR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Some mention of this has been made already. It is a major reason for the loss of credibility over the past two decades of the medical paradigm for thinking about educational problems. Perhaps labels would not matter so much if they led to effective assistance for children with either mild or severe problems in social living and school learning.

The fact is that 'treatments' that belong to the medical model, such as alternative placements, extended counselling and psychotherapy, have a very poor track record in delivering or showing that they can deliver 'cures' for deviant behaviour.

Again, Topping's *Educational systems for disruptive adolescents* is a major, up-to-date source book for the evidence, since he surveys the field so widely and draws on research findings in both the UK and the USA.

Topping draws attention to the lack of evaluative data. In both countries, special programs for socially or emotionally disturbed pupils are rarely evaluated, though many are described. On the other hand, the few evaluative studies lack descriptive information about the exact nature of the programs that produce the effects.

Of interest is the finding that when evaluation is undertaken results are often no better or slightly worse than the known 'spontaneous remission' rate of 66%.

There is clearly then, a great responsibility for any system that sets up special programs for 'disturbed students' to ensure that these are most carefully evaluated, since they may do no good to the pupils involved and may even do harm.

This applies also to interventions involving some types of psychotherapy and counselling. An effectiveness study by Fisher in 1978 (cited in Topping, p. 13) found that

> lack of effectiveness was the rule rather than the exception. In addition a pattern of deterioration was found in which clients of professionals were found to do less well than people with similar problems who received no professional services whatsoever.

Fortunately, evidence such as this has stimulated many professional agencies overseas and in Australia to greater awareness of the need to evaluate and examine their services more carefully, and it could be

hoped that improvements are now taking place. Recent work by Kolvin in the UK, reported in a book entitled *Help starts here* (1981), documents a better than 66% improvement rate for some intervention methods including behavioural and counselling ones. It must be remembered, however, that though these were school-based, they required a great deal of input from highly trained professionals who were on their mettle to prove to Margaret Thatcher's government that treatment does indeed work for children identified as having behavioural problems. Papers relating to this study were presented at the First Australian Guidance Conference in 1985.

Thus many intervention methods are still at the stage of being on trial and under scrutiny. The view that all we need to do is catch these children early and fix them up is one that must still have a question mark after it. The best bet seems to be to deal with misbehaviour where and when it occurs in the natural environment. The chances are that you will be successful, since two-thirds of children improve without special help!

THE PROMISE OF THE EDUCATIONAL/ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

It is not being suggested that stressed teachers, principals and students should simply wait around until problem students 'spontaneously remit'.

There is, fortunately, the promise of a great range of solutions if an educational and ecological approach is taken to the problem of disruptive behaviour. This is the approach that is now being adopted in many systems around the world.

At the same time that the medical model was going out of favour, research was being done that gave rise to much more optimism about what schools themselves could do to *prevent* disruptive and other forms of negative behaviour. The 'effective schools' literature is now vast, and full of promising ideas.

Rutter's famous research was reported in the book *Fifteen thousand hours* (1979). It showed that, regardless of intake area and pupils' characteristics on entry to high schools, the schools themselves made a difference to attendance rates, behaviour in school, public examination results and levels of officially recorded delinquency.

In 1982 the Phi Delta Kappa Commission on Discipline in the USA produced its *Handbook for developing schools with good discipline*. From an analysis of 500 survey forms from schools reported to have good discipline, twelve common characteristics of these schools were identified. These are worth repeating.

> These schools do many things that have been done by good schools and good educators for a long time.
>
> These schools have fostered good discipline by creating a total school environment that is conducive to good discipline rather than adopting isolated practices to deal with discipline problems.
>
> Most of the educators view their school as a place where staff and students come to work and experience the success of doing something well.
>
> These schools are student-oriented.
>
> These schools focus on causes of discipline problems rather than symptoms.
>
> Programs in these schools emphasise positive behaviour and use preventive measures rather than punitive actions to improve discipline.

These schools adapt practices to meet their own identified needs and to reflect their own styles of operation.

The principal plays a key role in making these schools what they are.

The programs in these schools often result, either through happy coincidence or through deliberate design, from the teamwork of a capable principal and some other staff member who has personal leadership qualities that complement those of the principal.

The staff of these schools believe in their schools and in what their students can do, and they expend unusual amounts of energy to make that belief come true.

Teachers in these schools handle all or most of the routine discipline problems themselves.

The majority of these schools have developed stronger than average ties with parents and with community agencies.

The *Handbook* contains much more useful information, and guidelines for how a school can get started on improvement. Other excellent books such as the new Victorian handbook *Positive school discipline* are also extremely helpful and practical.

The ADD report, along with world-wide research, points to a strong relationship between learning difficulties and problem behaviour. It is likely that many students are reacting to failure at school. These students should respond positively to a curriculum that provides them with some successes.

A discussion paper recently circulated by the Department of Education in Queensland is entitled *Student--teacher relationships* (1986). One of the opening paragraphs states

> For too long it has been the practice to identify the discipline or relationship problems solely in students, instead of within the interrelationships between students, teachers and parents. (p. 4)

A number of initiatives are suggested to help improve relationships within schools. This is an area that could well be examined in our system.

REDUCING AND MANAGING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOLS: FOUR LEVELS

An educational approach to behaviour problems suggests a wealth of strategies that schools could consider implementing. They can be roughly grouped into four main levels of intervention or provision.

Many of the suggestions in the 'effective schools' literature could be considered to be preventive measures as far as behaviour problems are concerned. Nevertheless, as is pointed out in *Secondary education: the future* (Education Department, 1986) even in 'good' schools, problems can arise.

In all schools, disruptive incidents will occur from time to time. Though it is commonly occurring, disruptive behaviour is not a simple phenomenon. It can and should be analysed from a variety of perspectives and dealt with through a variety of strategies.

The creation of a positive learning and social environment is basic to the prevention of misbehaviour, and much has been written about it in recent years. *Let's look at disruptive behaviour in secondary schools* (Education Department, 1986) encourages schools to examine school organisation, school climate, classroom management, the curriculum, and school--community relations. Improvement in these areas is the 'ground-level' upon which all other strategies for improving behaviour rely. All students need and will benefit from such an environment. Basic good practice should include the negotiating of behavioural expectations, and the consequences of not fulfilling them, with teachers, students and parents. Some schools are already doing this as they develop their discipline policies.

At the next level, and still in the preventive area, are programs that schools might set up to develop in students positive attitudes towards themselves and others, and social skills that they may not yet have acquired. Many schools in Tasmania have begun self-esteem programs for students. A variety of other programs to develop empathy, social skills, life skills, negotiation skills, problem-solving and assertiveness are also available for schools to adapt to suit their particular needs. Guidance officers can often assist schools to establish these programs, as can curriculum officers from the health education team. This is the domain of 'affective education'. Courses for teachers wanting to study this in greater depth are available through the Centre for Continuing Education for Teachers.

Given that problems will inevitably arise between teachers and students, and between students, there is a need to consider how problem behaviour will be dealt with when it occurs. It is important that it is dealt with in ways that prevent future problems, rather

than in ways that cause an escalation of ill-feeling, or much of the good work at the first two levels will be undone. Teachers often require assistance with communication and counselling skills. They need ways to confront students, effectively communicate expectations to them and engage in problem-solving without further antagonising or backing students into corners.

For a very few students measures may need to be taken to stop their misbehaviour and prevent their interfering with the rights of others. It must be remembered that education is a right and not a privilege; nevertheless, to protect the rights of others, some students may have to be excluded from the classroom or the school for varying periods of time. The forms of exclusion used in a school need careful consideration to ensure that their effects are as positive in the long term as it is possible for them to be, both for the students excluded, and for the rest of the school. Other measures, such as restitution, also merit consideration.

RESPONSES TO SERIOUS MISBEHAVIOUR

The last level, just described, is the one that schools and principals are frequently most concerned about. Serious misbehaviour is conspicuous, occasionally dangerous, and requires prompt effective action so that is stopped.

One purpose of this present booklet has been to suggest that some responses to misbehaviour, including the labelling and segregating of groups of students, are highly questionable. A second purpose has been to emphasise the importance of efforts at minimising disruptive incidents through attention to the social and learning environment of the school. There is not much point in developing elaborate strategies for dealing with serious misbehaviour if it keeps occurring at a high rate because of poor student--staff relations or an inappropriate curriculum.

There are a number of strategies available that schools could consider using to deal with persistent and/or serious misbehaviour. It is important for schools to select strategies that form a total framework for positive discipline and behaviour-management. An *ad hoc* collection of responses is unlikely to succeed.

VARIED PROVISIONS TO ASSIST SCHOOLS

Topping's *Educational systems for disruptive adolescents* (1983) is a guide to the selection of effective provisions. After reviewing a large number of these, he concludes the book with a description of what he calls a 'cost-effective cascade' of provision that schools and systems can make. He points out that if a system provides only one or two types, (for example, itinerant consultants to give advice on individual students, plus off-site units), it is setting up both provisions to fail. Yet systems cannot afford to support all possible intervention methods. What is required is a judicious selection from among those with a record of effectiveness. These should be arranged in a sequence so that teachers 'have the security of knowing that there is a coordinated system for dealing with disruptive pupils' (p. 165). Pupils should also know this.

> The availability of a sequence of strategies of proven effectiveness also implies that the labelling and categorising of children for administrative purposes becomes totally functionless and irrelevant. . . . There is no need to try to predict how a child will behave in a different environment. . . . the cascade or continuum is operated on the basis of formulating, testing and re-formulating hypothesis. This is also known as the 'suck-it-and-see' model. (p. 165)

As he points out the 'cost-effective cascade' also offers schools an indication of effective preventive actions. In addition he describes a number of interesting ideas that have yet to be evaluated but look promising. Innovation is to be encouraged if it is well evaluated.

Other states are making contributions. The Western Australian report, for example, recognises the need for system support in developing a range of approaches likely to produce the best results without excessive expenditure. It also recognises the role that existing suppport services, for example, guidance officers and social workers, might take in schools, suggesting (p. 22) that they might be used as resource people for the school system rather than primarily as practitioners working with individuals.

CONCLUSION

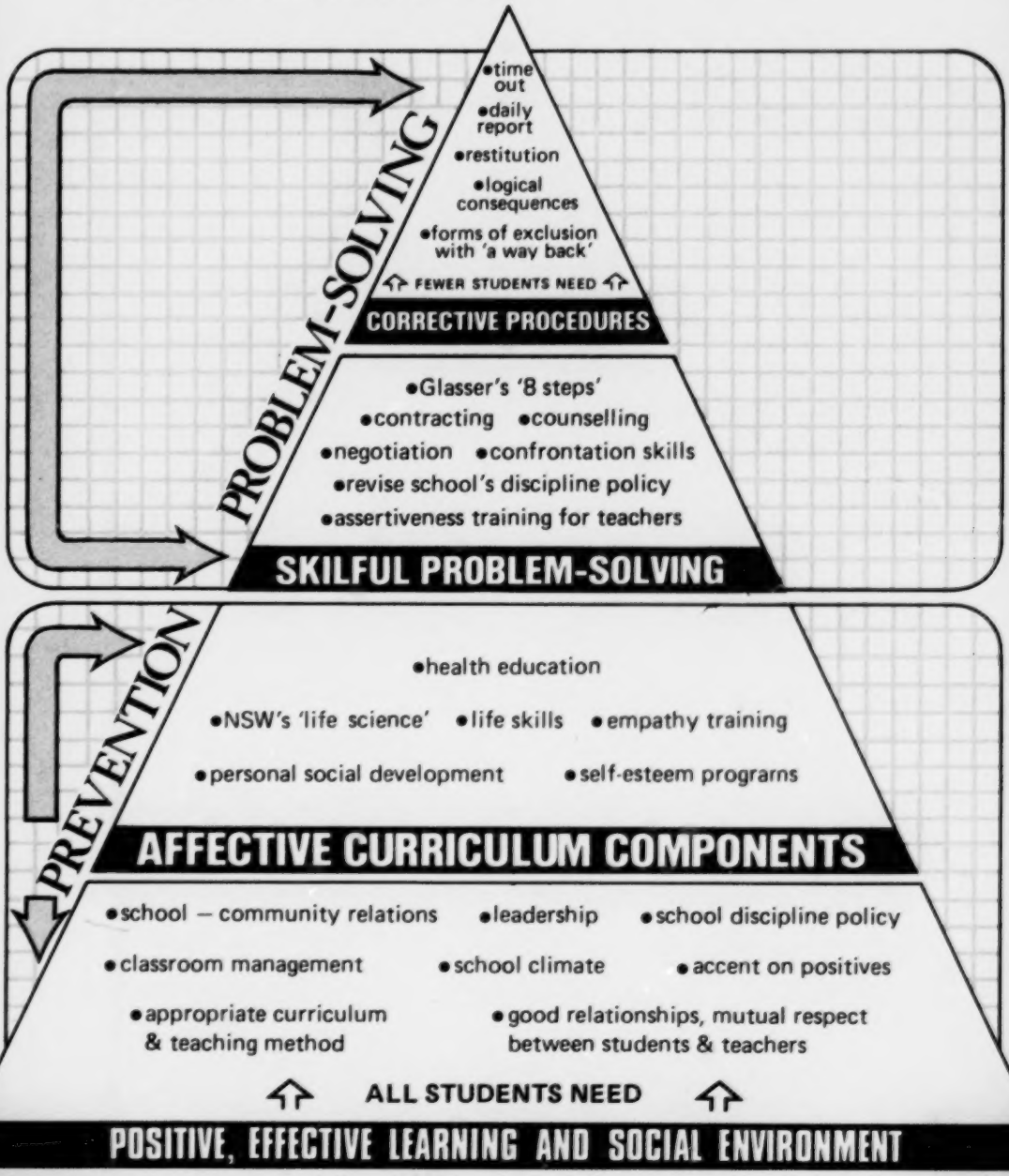
Emphasising the positive role that schools can take in improving students' behaviour does not imply that schools are the causes of all social ills. Obviously certain community attitudes, changes in family structure, poverty, unemployment and other factors do influence the behaviour and attitudes of young people. The Western Australian report makes this quite clear, pointing out that

> There is no simple straightforward causal link between what schools do and the future behaviour of the students. It cannot be denied that schools have a role to play in shaping attitudes and social behaviour, but they are one influence among many. (p. 8)

Nevertheless, there are things that schools *can* control and shape with assistance from parents, even though they can do little about many external social factors. By focusing on those things that are within their control to change, schools are most likely to minimise problem behaviour and create harmonious working environments for teachers and students alike.

FOUR LEVELS OF PROVISIONS SCHOOLS CAN MAKE TO DEVELOP POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR IN STUDENTS

The levels shown below are not alternatives. Most schools would need to make provision at all levels. The activities and skills suggested are not exhaustive. They are listed to prompt creative thinking. Some activities will be useful at more than one level.



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